

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /090 W
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R 260615Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8636
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMCONSUL ADANA
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMCONSUL IZMIR
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANKARA 6359

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TU, LY, EG, IS
SUBJECT: TURKISH-ARAB RELATIONS

1. DURING LAST FEW WEEKS, THERE HAVE BEEN A COUPLE OF INTERESTING DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD. FIRST, AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT, WAS TURKEY'S REACTION TO THE BORDER CLASHES BETWEEN LIBYA AND EGYPT. TRADITIONALLY, TURKEY HAS ATTEMPTED TO REMAIN UNINVOLVED, IF NOT ENTIRELY NEUTRAL, IN INTER-ARAB PROBLEMS. THIS TIME WAS NO EXCEPTION, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE STRONG PRESSURES TO SUPPORT LIBYA.

2. LIBYA HAS A UNIQUE PLACE IN TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION. IT IS NOT ONLY AN OIL-RICH COUNTRY AND THEREFORE COURTED BY OIL-POOR TURKEY, BU
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IT ALSO EMPLOYS SEVERAL THOUSAND TURKISH WORKERS (THE PRESS CLAIMS 20,000) AND IS INCREASINGLY REGARDED AS AN ATTRACTIVE SUPPLEMENT OR EVEN ALTERNATIVE TO WESTERN EUROPE AS A MAJOR EMPLOYER OF TURKS. MOREOVER, LIBYA IS ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES WHICH HAS GIVEN TURKEY ALMOST WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT IN ITS CYPRUS POLICY. IT EVEN PROVIDED MILITARY ASSISTANCE AT THE TIME OF THE 1974 CYPRUS INVASION. TURKS, WHO GENERALLY FEEL THEMSELVES TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD

AND MISTREATED BY THEIR ALLIES, HAVE REACTED VERY POSITIVELY TO LIBYAN SUPPORT. AT THE TIME OF THE CLASH BETWEEN EGYPT AND LIBYA, THE NEWSPAPERS AND STATE-CONTROLLED TURKISH RADIO AND TELEVISION BASED THEIR NEWS ACCOUNTS ALMOST ENTIRELY ON LIBYAN REPORTS. SEVERAL EDITORIALS APPEARED CALLING ON THE GOT TO TAKE A PUBLIC POSITION IN SUPPORT OF LIBYA. HOWEVER, THE ONLY PUBLIC ACTION OF THE GOT WAS FOR FONMIN CAGLAYANGIL TO CALL ON THE LIBYAN AMBASADOR AND THE EGYPTIAN CHARGE AND URGE RESTRAINT.

3. PERHAPS IN PART TO MAKE UP FOR THIS FAILURE TO GIVE PUBLIC SUPPORT, TURKISH MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY, OGUZHAN ASILTURK, IS NOW IN TRIPOLI ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT. AT THE SAME TIME, A LIBYAN "DELEGATION" CONSISTING OF A LEGISLATOR, MUHAMMED EL JERRAH, AND THE LIBYAN CULTURAL ATTACHE MET IN ANKARA AUGUST 23 WITH THE LEADERS OF TURKEY'S LARGEST LABOR CONFEDERATION, TURK-IS. PUBLIC STATEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH BOTH VISITS HAVE BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE OF LIBYA. A JOINT DECLARATION RELEASED IN ANKARA BY THE VISITING LIBYAN DELEGATION AND TURK-IS CONDEMNED EGYPTIAN ACTIONS AND CLAIMED THAT THE CLASH WAS A RESULT OF THE EFFORTS OF "INTERNATIO
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NAL IMPERIALISM" TO TURN MUSLIM AGAINST MUSLIM.

4. THE SECOND DEVELOPMENT INVOLVED THE SECOND LARGEST PARTY OF TURKEY'S CURRENT COALITION GOVERNMENT, THE ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY. IN THE TWO PREVIOUS COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN WHICH IT HAS PARTICIPATED, THE NSP SPEARHEADED TURKEY'S EFFORTS TO
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IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH THE MUSLIM WORLD. WHILE THESE EFFORTS HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN MEETING THE EXTREMELY OPTIMISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR AUTHORS (CHEAP PETROLEUM FOR TURKEY, UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT FOR TURKEY'S POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS, ETC), THEY HAVE BEEN A MODEST PUBLIC RELATIONS SUCCESS. THEY HAVE ALSO PROVIDED A VEHICLE FOR THE NSP TO PROMOTE ITS DOMESTIC IMAGE AS THE DEFENDER OF TURKEY'S ISLAMIC HERITAGE. MINISTER OF INDUSTRY ASILTURK'S VISIT TO TRIPOLI IS PART OF THAT EFFORT. SIMILARLY, DEPUTY PRIMIN AND CHAIRMAN OF THE NSP, NECMETTIN ERGAKAN, THIS WEEK PLAYED HOST TO ALL MUSLIM AMBASSADORS IN ANKARA AT A WELL PUBLICIZED IFTAR DINNER (THE BREAKING OF THE DAILY FAST DURING RAMADAN).

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5. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE LOOKED UPON THE NSP EFFORT AS AN UNWELCOME COMPLICATION IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE MUSLIM WORLD. THESE OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT TURKEY SHOULD CONTINUE WHAT THEY SEE AS A PRO-ARAB BUT CAREFULLY BALANCED MIDDLE EASTERN POLICY. TURKEY VOTED AGAINST THE CREATION OF ISRAEL AND HAS OPPOSED ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ARAB TERRITORIES CONSISTENTLY. IT HAS ALSO, HOWEVER, ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED A DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL. SO FAR, THS NSP HAS NOT PUBLICLY CALLED FOR A BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, BUT DURING HIS IFTAR DINNER ERBAKAN MADE SOME STRONG ANTI-ISRAELI REMARKS, INCLUDING THE STATEMENT THAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN AGGRESSIVE COUNTRY.

6. WITH RESPECT TO THE LIBYA-EGYPT QUESTION, MFA OFFICIALS WANT VERY MUCH TO REMAIN UNINVOLVED. NEVERTHELESS, SHOULD EGYPT AND LIBYA AGAIN COME TO BLOWS, THE MFA WILL COME UNDER HEAVY PUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL

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AND POLITICAL PRESSURE TO TAKE A PRO-LIBYAN STANCE; AND THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD THE LINE AGAIN. THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT OF A PERIOD OF MOURNING AFTER THE DEATH OF MAKARIOS WILL NOT HELP. ON THE OTHER HAND, FONMIN CAGLAYANGIL IS SAID TO BE VERY ANXIOUS TO MAKE A TWICE-POSTPONED VISIT TO CAIRO LATER THIS YEAR (TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER), SO HE PRESUMABLY WILL LEND HIS SUPPORT TO THE EFFORT TO STAY ON THE SIDELINES.
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